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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BANJUL 000230

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DAKAR PASS RAO, DAO, AND ODC

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/14/2016
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [GA](#) [SG](#)
SUBJECT: THE GAMBIA: GROWING TENSIONS WITH SENEGAL OVER
FOILED COUP PLOT

REF: A. BANJUL 227

- [1](#)B. BANJUL 222 ET AL
- [1](#)C. DAKAR 898
- [1](#)D. BANJUL 190
- [1](#)E. 03 BANJUL 314 ET AL
- [1](#)F. BANJUL 190 (ALL NOTAL)

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Classified By: AMBASSADOR JOSEPH STAFFORD, REASON 1.4 (B AND D)

[1](#)1. (U) This is an action message -- see para 10.

SUMMARY

[1](#)2. (C) GOTG convoked diplomatic corps April 13 to protest GOS' alleged failure to cooperate with the Gambians' investigation into the coup plot thwarted March 21 as well. In a well-worn GOTG accusation, Gambian officials alleged that GOS permitted Gambian "renegades and dissidents" to operate freely in Senegal. Among other grievances against the GOS voiced by the Gambians, they cited movement of Senegalese forces close to the Gambian border to "foment unrest" here during the August/October bilateral crisis over transport and border issues. They reported the Gambian authorities' April 7 detention of a Senegalese "intelligence operative." The Gambians ended the briefing with an appeal for international pressure on the GOS so as to compel its full cooperation with the GOTG's investigation of the failed coup plot. We recommend that Department convoke Gambian Ambassador to reinforce Ambassador's message on imperative of GOTG pursuing its concerns with GOS through peaceful dialog; we also propose that Department reiterate our human rights concerns (e.g., treatment of detainees) over the GOTG's ongoing investigation of the foiled coup plot. END SUMMARY.

GOTG'S ANTI-GOS ALLEGATIONS

[1](#)3. (SBU) Ref a reports the April 12 visit to Banjul by Senegalese Formin Gadio to deliver a message of "solidarity" from President Wade to President Jammeh following the coup plot thwarted here March 21 (ref b). The evening of April 13, the GOTG convoked the diplomatic corps to deliver a lengthy allegation of Senegalese misbehavior toward The Gambia, including, most recently, GOS failure to cooperate in the GOTG's ongoing investigation of the failed plot. Various senior GOTG officials were on hand, with Environment Minister Edward Singhateh and Attorney General Cheikh Tijan Hyndara the principal briefers. They explained that at an emergency GOTG

cabinet meeting earlier that day, Jammeh had given instructions to convene the diplomatic corps to deliver its anti-GOS protest. (NOTE: Following Senegalese Ambassador's recent recall, no Senegalese Embassy rep attended the briefing. END NOTE.)

THE GOTG'S BILL OF PARTICULARS

14. (SBU) The GOTG Ministers asserted that Senegalese meddling in Gambian internal security matters was not new; they spoke of longstanding GOS practice of granting refuge to Gambian "renegades and dissidents," e.g., figures involved in previously failed coup plots such as notorious rebel Kukoi Samba Sanyang and followers, and permitting them to operate freely. The Ministers asserted that, over the years, the GOTG had repeatedly requested GOS assistance in countering these nefarious elements by extraditing or simply expelling them, but Senegalese authorities had always been unresponsive. By contrast, the GOTG officials asserted, when the GOS itself requested similar assistance -- e.g., handing over Casamance rebel elements entering Gambian territory -- the GOTG invariably complied. (COMMENT: The Ministers exaggerated the extent of responsiveness to the GOS on this score; we note, per ref, GOS irritation at GOTG's failure in summer 2005 to hand over rebel fighters. END COMMENT)

15. (SBU) In reciting their list of grievances, the Gambian officials mentioned the August/October 2005 dispute with Senegal over border and transport issues, accusing the GOS of moving troops closer to the border with The Gambia during that period of severe bilateral strain in an attempt to "create unrest" in this country. They went on to cite the December 2004 assassination here of prominent journalist Deyda Hydara, alleging that the GOS, maintaining its uncooperative stance toward Gambian security forces, denied GOTG investigators access to principal witnesses to the

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murder (i.e., the two female colleagues of Hydara wounded in the attack on Hydara and taken to Dakar following the incident for medical treatment).

THE FAILED COUP PLOT

16. (SBU) Turning to the failed coup plot, the Gambians claimed that ringleader Lt Col Ndure Cham remained in the Casamance region and that both the GOTG and GOS knew his precise location, but that Senegalese authorities had so far declined to detain and hand him over to the GOTG. National Intelligence Agency head Harry Sambou, on hand for the briefing, chimed in that radio stations in the Casamance had recently aired an interview with Cham at his hiding place. Referring to Formin Gadio's April 12 visit here, the GOTG officials said Jammeh had pressed not only for the GOS to pick up Cham, but also to reveal to the GOTG the full extent of its knowledge and actions surrounding the aborted overthrow attempt. Ambassador asked if the GOTG had hard evidence of GOS complicity in the plot; the Gambians responded that their evidence was so far limited to the assertions of Senegalese involvement contained in detainees' confessions (ref d) and that, hence, "a full explanation" by the GOS was imperative.

DETENTION OF GOS INTELLIGENCE OFFICER

17. (SBU) In what they portrayed as the latest example of GOS meddling in national security matters here, the GOTG Ministers stated that on April 7 Gambian authorities had detained at Banjul airport a "Senegalese intelligence operative," identified as Frederick Napel, possessing various false identification cards. Under questioning, the latter had claimed that he was in Banjul to meet a person coming

from Paris, the daughter of Casamance rebel figure Salif Sadio, but Gambian investigators determined that his story lacked credibility and were continuing to question him in order to determine his true mission here.

APPEAL FOR PRESSURE ON GOS

¶8. (SBU) The Gambians ended the briefing with an appeal for international pressure on the GOS so as to compel it to cooperate fully with the GOTG's investigation into the failed coup plot and cease meddling in internal security matters here. When Ambassador mentioned imperative of GOTG's pursuing its concerns with GOS through peaceful dialog, the GOTG officials gave assurances of the GOTG leadership's commitment to doing so. Ambassador asked if the GOTG intended to take its concerns to the UN, African Union, ECOWAS, or another international or regional organization; the GOTG Ministers responded vaguely that the GOTG would consider "all avenues" for its "diplomatic campaign."

COMMENT

9.(C) The GOTG's initiative to convoke the diplomatic corps underscores its growing irritation over a suspected Senegalese coverup in connection with the failed plot. Judging from their presentation, the Gambians regard a Senegalese coverup as in keeping with what they allege is a longstanding pattern of GOS stonewalling on GOTG requests for action against Gambian "renegades and dissidents" in Senegal. We note, in this respect, that in the past -- e.g., in March/April 2003 (ref e) -- Jammeh has alleged efforts by Wade and his government to destabilize the GOTG, and Gambian officials have long complained about GOS' perceived harboring of radical dissidents allegedly bent on overthrowing Jammeh. In his recent letter to President Bush alleging Dakar's involvement in the failed coup plot (ref f) Jammeh refrained from requesting USG action; now, the GOTG is calling for international pressure on the GOS.

ACTION REQUEST

¶10. (C) We recommend that Department reinforce Ambassador's demarches here by calling in the Gambian Ambassador to reinforce call on the GOTG to exercise restraint and work to resolve its concerns with the GOS through peaceful dialog. We also propose that Department reiterate our human rights concerns (e.g., treatment of detainees) over the GOTG's

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ongoing investigation of the foiled coup plot.

STAFFORD